'TWEEN CLYDE AND TWEED

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If I can see the bees through glory wingin',
To ither fowk I 'll leave the hairps an' singin'
When I reach hame.

TWEEN CLYDE AND TWEED

BY

GILBERT RAE

Book o' mine. Book o' my hairt,
Ye 're gaun furth alane
And I wistna—the wund may blaw ony airt
But, come sun or rain,
Aye mind, wee book, o' my soul ye 're pairt
And—my very ain.

LONDON, W.C. 1
ERSKINE MACDONALD LTD.

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First edition (limited to one thousand subscription copies), ... November 1919

TO

THE RIGHT HON.

SIR DONALD MACLEAN, K.B.E., M.P.,

AND

COLONEL JOHN BUCHAN

Wi' snaw the hills are cappit,
The Tweed gangs lauchin' by,
The glen, wi' glory happit,
Staun's 'neath a wintry sky.
Yestreen, when wild ondingin'
O' snaw swept up Tweedsmuir,
The birds turned frae their singin'
To chirp a winter prayer.

We turn frae scenes enraptured,
Where whaups weep ower the tarns,
Frae glories that were captured
Within the House o' Barns.
Oh, wizard, bauld in story,
Son o' the heath an' fell,
What maitter Whig or Tory—
Here 's to yer ain dear sel'.

An' you, the truth hame-bringer,
The shepherd o' State lambs,
There 's no' a sweeter singer
O' legislative psalms.
Yer hairt is richtly placit,
Sir Donald, true Maclean,
The storms o' war ye 've facit,
Ay, ye are a' oor ain.

Sae in this place o' pleesure,
Auld Peebles by the Tweed,
Yer legs baith wrax at leisure,
There 's nae ca' noo for speed.
We 're here to cock oor bannet,
Thenk God that Scotland 's free,
An', o' the sum that 's anit,
To haun' a pairt to thee.

INTRODUCTION

At the request of many friends these verses venture upon the rugged path of publication.

To Colonel John Buchan, whose benediction has been pronounced upon them, I tender sincere thanks.

But it is to Mr. Galloway Kyle, Editor of *The Poetry Review*, a journal full of literary inspiration and poetic truth, whose name is redolent of a countryside beloved of all, I am indebted most. It was Mr. Kyle's kindly sympathy that made publication possible.

There are scenes in this beautiful land that the leal Scot holds for ever dear. To each there is one glen only that is the fairest, and the Tweed herd believes the wild roses that bloom on his own hillside to be the sweetest of all. The pieces contained in this volume are, for the most part, of the Borderland. And if the hills that guard the infant Tweed be lifted up above all others, lay the blame to love's devotion—for love is blind.

As a mother, greatly fearing, watches the outgoing into a strange, untried experience of a child held very dear, so too at this hour my heart bids farewell and Godspeed to these outpourings of my soul.

GILBERT RAE.

Biggar, Lanarkshire.

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AN AULD BORDER DYKER'S PRAYER

I 've a cauld, hard hairt like the muckle stanes
That lie on the Border Hills,
An' the stoun o' age creeps through my banes,
An' the soul wi' langin' fills.
An' the soul wi' langin' fills
For the easin' o' the load,
That the hand o' time for ever shuils
'Neath Thy hammer-stroke, O God.

It 's a lang, lang road that leads to hame,
An' the dykes are crumlin' doon,
But, Lord, yer luve is aye the same
To a thochtless Border loon.
To a thochtless Border loon,
An' a dyker far frae grace,
Wha canna see for daith's dark froon
The bonnie restin'-place.

I 've dyket lang on a cauld hill-end,
An' my back is booed wi' care,
But weel I ken what here I bend
Will a' be strauchent there.
Will a' be strauchent there,
By the hairt that lo'es us a' ;
Whaur the storms o' life will come nae mair,
Or the tears o' grief doonfa'.

There 's a dyke o' luve in anither land
  A bield an' a circlin' fauld,
A staff o' houp for a shakin' hand,
  An' a dyker growin' auld.
  An' a dyker growin' auld,
His life's-wark nearly by ;
  Whase hame an' thocht is the hairtsome hald
Far ayont the starry sky.

Lord, lay yer dear hand intil mine,
  Sair chackit though mine be,
An' let the warm saft touch o' Thine
  Fa' licht on sic as me.
  Fa' licht on sic as me,
Wha kensna hoo to pray,
  But tremblin' waits by the jummlin' sea,
For the brekin' o' the day.

TO A BIRD SINGING IN A BLINK OF SUNSHINE IN EARLY WINTER

Bird in the blink o' sun, singin' sae cheery,
Dinna ye ken, ah! dinna ye ken,
That, back o' this sunny 'oor, cauldrife an' dreary,
Winter will sune be the laird o' the glen?

Haws on the hawthorn trees hingin' an' swingin',
Ripe wi' a love that is faithfu' an' true,
Are yours for the pu'in', when wearied wi' singin'—
The Lord's ain providin' for wee birds like you.

Up soars yer happy sang, e'en though the foamin'
O' sunset is geth'rin' to dee in the west;
And angels wi' gentle haun's streetch frae the gloamin',
To gether that sang to heaven's valley o' rest.

Bird in the lift abune, what is 't ye 're cryin'?—
'Hae faith, oh, hae faith in life's lang winter day;
Though cauld wunds o' sorrow at sunset gang sighin',
Hope lifts her ripe haws by the snaw-drifted way.'

Sae in love's blink o' sun, singin' for ever
The sang, happy bird, that ye noo sweetly frame,
We 'll wait till the sunset fa's fair on the river,
An' sangs o' life's liltin' are a' gethered hame.

THE PAIRTIN'

It 's Spring in the howe o' the hameland yonder,
Whaur the birds wi' their nests are unco thrang,
And a mavis sings frae a hairt grown fonder
A sang—an auld love-sang,
That mounts to the braes whaur I sit and ponder
The morn—the morn I gang.

The reek frae a cot laich doon I 'm sichtin',
The hame frae whilk I am wae to pairt,
Whaur a brave lass sits at the gloamin' dichtin'
Hot tears drawn frae her hairt,
And the lowin' sun in the west is lichtin',
Heaven's airt—Heaven's bonnie airt.

I hear oor bairn in the credle greetin',
Dool throws its first lang shadow there ;
And a wandered lamb sends its mournfu' bleatin',
Alang the hillside bare.
And laich in the howm where the burns are meetin'
A sabbin' fills the air.

The green-leaved saughs ower the banks are swingin',
The burn rins on to the muckle sea ;
The day's fareweel in the dews are hingin'
Like tear-draps on the lea.
And a whaup wails oot where the mirk is clingin',
A lang fareweel to me.

THE SOUTER'S PARADISE

THEY say that heaven is lippin' ower wi' glory,
Gowden and fair ;
That bonnie bairns, an' dune fowk auld an' hoary,
Are singin' there.
To trauchled hairts dootless it will be sweet
In burns far yont to lave their weary feet,
And greet nae mair.

Alang yon heichts wi' joy I aft ha'e trampit,
Through happy 'oors ;
But this back-end I find my auld limbs crampit
Wi' by-gane shoo'ers.
Yet in my soul, wi' stoun's that wrax far ben,
I am yince mair within Drumelzier glen,
Amang the flo'ers.

I 've fished the bosom o' Tweed's bonnie river,
And ken ilk turn ;
Hev watched the dawnin' on the far hills quiver,
Syne brek, an' burn.
Ay, I have lain ootstreetched upon the braes,
And heard the linties wheeplin' oot their praise
For them wha murn.

On Tweedsmuir heichts my bees ha'e preed the heather,
Whase blossoms red
Seemed like a feast for them an' me thegither,
By God ootspread.
Gang whaur men will, for me the hill-ward road
Will ever be the pastureland o' God,
Whaur souls are fed.

Sae let the heaven to whilk my days are airtin'
Be jist the same;
Hills, burns, an' flo'ers, withoot that awfu' pairtin'
In daith's dark kame.[1]
If I can see the bees through glory wingin',
To ither fowk I 'll leave the hairps an' singin'
When I reach hame.

[1] Kame, a low ridge.

THE SCOTCH HERD

It grups me maistly when I briest my native hills,
The stoorin' heather track aneath my feet,
'Tis then the love o' a' my hairt owerfills,
An' clings wi' blessin' sweet.
An' clings wi' blessin' sweet,
Abune me nicht an' day,
Fauldin' aroond its mercy-seat,
The leal hairts far away.

A wee hill burn to me for ever rins
A great big river wi' God's guidness fu'.
And aft at nichtfa', 'mang the gowden whins,
I 've seen a licht brek through.
I 've seen a licht brek through,
As if a lowin' star
Heaven drappit, lay amang the dew
To guide me yont the scaur.

Spellbund I heard a lintie's cheerie sang
Yae hairtsome mornin' in the airly spring.
And evermair, it maitters na' the thrang,
I hear that wee bird sing.
I hear that wee bird sing
Its message frae the braes,
And meybe whaur my soul seeks wing
I 'll hear that lintie's praise.

'TWEEN CLYDE AND TWEED

I herd the ootmaist hirsel in Dunsyre,
Whaur brackens on the knowes in simmer wave,
Whaur freedom hauds the ashes o' its fire,
Within a martyr's grave.
Within a martyr's grave,
Ower whilk the white haur dreeps,
But nae lood storms that hillward rave,
Can waken him wha sleeps.

God in His boondless mercy keep me where
The cry o' sheep, an' new-born lambs I hear.
This passin' world wad cheer my hairt nae mair,
If sic joys werena' near.
If sic joys werena' near—
The muirland burns that roll,
The hill-whaups cry within my ear,
The heather in my soul.

HAIRST, 1867

Dod, but the hairsts were hairtsome then,
In the years round saxty-seeven,
Wi' the lang scythe-sweep o' buirdly men,
And the sang frae morn till even.
In the kindly days o' auld langsyne
I hae stookit the gowden sheaves,
Wi' the wee herd laddie, barely nine,
Makin' bands wi' his sturdy neives.

I can hear that callant whustlin' yet
On the croon o' Howslack braes;
The stibble field, wi' the dew-draps wet,
Will be wi' me a' my days.
I set the corn sheaves north an' sooth:
Wi' Life it is jist the same—
Sae the bonnie hairst o' a lang-gane youth
Is stookit and gethered hame.

A freendly bit was the gowden field,
When I was young an' strang;
The restin' 'oor in the stookit bield,
The crack, an' the lilted sang
Are things, yince felt, that only daith
At the last draucht cairts away;
Hoo grand in heaven if a hairst's sweet braith
Cam' waftin' up the brae!

HAIRST, 1917

Noo what a chenge in a chengin' world !
The glen 's a sair altered place,
When an auld dune man, wi' an aith, is whurled
The airt that is far frae grace.
There seems nae rest for man or beast,
Except in the hamely grave,
Whaur the weary form lies streekit east,
And the gresses ower him wave.

I stoitered oot to the gavel-end
O' my biggin' in the slack ;
Yestreen my pains seemed on the mend,
But noo they 're in my back.
The hairst was on, an' the fields were braw,
But, lod sake ! what a soond,
Whaur the sheaves cam' tumlin' raw on raw
As a fearsome thing gaed roond.

Twae men twae horses, an' some pairts
Gang joukin' here and there,
The corn stalks lyin' a' the airts,
Or birlin' in the air.
An' this is hairst ! Thenk God, I 'm auld,
My workin' days a' dune ;
Lang syne we laid it fauld on fauld,
Aneath the hervest mune.

HAIRST, 1917

But the bonnie hills bide aye like God,
Unchengin' to the last;
The rinnin' burn, the kirk-yaird road,
Things o' a happy past.
The restless world maun scrammel on,
Ay, there 's something sair amiss;
And I wadna swap, for its endless drone,
A hairst o' peace like this.

DRUMELZIER

Big rowin' heichts on ilka haun' are there,
Whaur weary fowk lift up their langin' een,
An' lookin' lang feel sorrowfu' nae mair,
For heav'n draws in atween.
For heav'n draws in atween;
The nichtfa', wat wi' tears,
And in this glen the Lord at e'en
Quaites a' oor anxious fears.

Far up the hope the Powsail sings a sang
That grups the hairt, an' airts me to the days
When, steeped in joy, the 'oors were streetchèd lang
On fair Drumelzier braes.
On fair Drumelzier braes,
Whaur ilka weel-kenned road
Seemed, wi' its windin' flo'ery ways,
A hill-track hame to God.

The miller's wheel stan's silent in the glen,
The croonin' burn aneath it hurries by,
On yon hillface a seggin' but-an-ben
Lies open to the sky.
Lies open to the sky,
An' through the seepin' haur,
A hill-whaup, wi' its greetin' cry,
Gangs sabbin' doon the scaur.

DRUMELZIER

Tweed's bonnie water, like the burn that rins
Frae oot the throne in oor lang-trysted hame,
Is aye the Jordan lavin' roond oor sins
By howms o' dool an' shame.
By howms o' dool an' shame,
Whaur hairps on saugh-wands hing,
An' murnin' hairts gang ower by name
The sangs they daurna sing.

The angels airt the morn ower Dawyck fells,
The simmer sun fa's licht on Merlin's grave,
And day's lang glory fills the noddin' bells
That in Mossfennan wave.
That in Mossfennan wave,
Whaur, wi' unshodden feet,
By banks whilk kindly waters lave,
We pu'd the blossoms sweet.

An' when at last my langin' hairt wad rest,
An' Love scores oot my sinnin' frae the scroll,
Then airt me to the glen I lo'e the best,
Drumelzier haud my soul!
Drumelzier haud my soul!
Whaur whaups an' plovers weep,
There whaur the big hills lift-ward roll,
Leave me in daith's lang sleep.

THE HAME-COMING

Dootless ere lang the kirk bells will be jowin',
When peacefu' days fa' in Glenholm yince mair.
On dark Cardon they 'll set the brainches lowin',
An' a' the herds will sing for gledness there.

An' ilka mither to her hairt will gether,
Wi' love weel-wechted wi' her prayers an' tears,
The buirdly son that, stridin' through the heather,
Comes hame for guid frae a' the bluidy years.

An off-hand nod will be his faither's greetin',
Although the gudeman's soul is swalled wi' pride;
A Scotsman's hairt to owerby fowk is cheatin',
Weel happit lies the manly love inside.

I 'll ken the 'oor o' the dear lad's returnin',
For Kep will scent his maister in the kame,[1]
An', be it nicht, I 'll set a lantern burnin',
To cheer my sodger laddie mairchin' hame.

Last nicht I saw the wintry sun's doon-fa'in',
Its flamin' glory swept alang the sky,
As if in Heaven the simmer wunds were blawin',
An' a' the saints o' God were stannin' by.

[1] A low ridge.

THE HAME-COMING

I canna thole to think on my bairn deein'
In ony ither but his mither's airms;
An' aft, far yont, my thochts on wings gang fleein',
An' syne return a' drookit wi' alairms.

In lang fore-nichts I 've heard the angels singin',
An' whiles there cam' a soondin' like his voice;
It 's wrang, I ken, to think on nae hame-bringin'—
But what o' them wha can nae mair rejoice?

Hae patience, Lord, I 've tholed, an' still am warslin' [1]
Wi' a' the dool that comes wi' sinfu' men;
But when the wunds o' peace frae Heaven blaw wastlin',
Oh, airt my laddie hameward doon the glen.

[1] Wrestling.

THE ROADMAN'S ROUP

Lay doon yer heavy burden, wife, ahint this roden tree
I planted when oor merried days were young.
Though this thorn-hedge may bield us baith frae Rouper-Tam's gleg e'e
It canna kep the clatter o' his tongue.

Ye wadna gang, my lassie, to the hoose that hauds the puir,
Till free o' debt an' hairt-clean as the day.
Oh! wae 's me for the thriftless lad whase sin has swept us bare,
But love is bauld to suffer an' forgi'e.

I see the yaird is fillin', an' the auld hoose jammin' fu';
They 're settin' oot yer dishes in a raw.
Frae han' to han' wi' careless lauch they pass things guid as new,
An' sheets o' linen white as driven snaw.

The bairns are pu'in' roses red frae aff the gable-end,
An' thochtless fowk are trampin' 'mong the balm.
The souter airts his hamegaun wi' an unco drucken bend,
An' liltin' oot a stanza o' a Psalm.

THE ROADMAN'S ROUP

I 'm hearin' ; ay, I 'm hearin'—thenk God ye canna hear—
The rouper's cry across oor auld kail-yaird.
But weel I ken yer hameless hairt breks wi' the tricklin' tear
That fa's in fareweel blessin' on the swaird.

The credle, decked wi' yer ain hands, that credled oor wee weans
That a' but yin sleep soond in God's dear hame—
That saft love's nest, wi' jest and jeer, has swalled a packman's gains,
A wifeless loon that daurna' wed for shame.

Dod, hoo the rouper's hammer fa's wi' dool upon the hairt,
While we maun stan' ootside for evermair.
Oh ! that oor souls this nicht, dear wife, wad tak' the heavenward airt
An' wi' oor bairns God's love for ever share.

Come, lass o' mine, the roup is ower ; we 'll daunner to the gates
O' that bare hoose they biggit for the auld.
Oor laddie 's safe, we 'll no hae lang—near han' the dear Lord waits
To welcome twae dune fowk within His fauld.

A BORDER TAILOR'S SOLILOQUY

BETTER than a' the insooped stoor o' wealth
Is this quaite joy that gethers at the hairt ;
I 've little gear, but boondless store o' health,
Whaur croods the world, I haste the tither airt.
I 'm but a puir man, but a puir man's een,
Weel opened, sees his God, and a' atween.

Aft as I sit low-hunkered on this board,
I hear them singin' in that ither lan',
And whiles, in kindly mercy, my dear Lord
Comes saftly ben, and grups me by the han'.
They little ken, wha peety lanely days,
The weel-snecked door aye keps the angels' praise.

For lang wi' duds I 've happed this bonnie glen,
Through a' thae years ' the tyler ' I hae been,
But, oh, this thocht sae seldom comes to men—
There 's mair in man than man has ever seen ;
A weel-spun wab wi' scorn is aft passed by,
For claith that 's steepit in the gaudy dye.

At getherin' e'en I tak the fisher's rod
An' daunner yont to worship 'mong the bens ;
It seems a daft-like airt to seek for God,
But a' is weel—the trystin'-place He kens.
Whae seeks for ease frae a' Life's mony wrangs,
Mak's for the heichts whaur Nature sings her sangs.

A BORDER TAILOR'S SOLILOQUY

There on the braes a tyler tunes his soul,
And clears his thrapple for that ither day,
When, yont the lift, his happy sang will roll—
Nae blackbird's lilt will ever match that lay.
Ay, e'en the scent o' new-mawn hay leads hame,
For God's ain love lies faulded in the same.

Sae let me gang, though donnert I may seem,
My mornin', wi' the lave, will sune be past;
What maitter if at times I miss the gleam,
If I win hame, if I win hame at last?
Up-by, thenk God, they speerna o' yer tred,
By pastures green e'en tylers' souls are led.

THE AULD GAIRDENER

THREESCORE and mair hae spun Life's peerie roond,
The saxties gied my back the scholar's bend.
He 's no deid auld wha hears ilk passin' soond.
This spring I delved the yaird frae end to end.
I am the last, the hinmaist o' them a',
Wha in the bald strong years o' fifty-three,
Took spade in han'—but noo the shadows fa',
And yont the mirk the angels compass me.

Yestreen I heard the laird and leddy's crack,
When I was thrang hand-weedin' 'mong the kale.
I hadna time to straucht my bended back,
When words cam' to me like the doomster's wail.
I canna gie her words the soople turn,
Nor airt them wi' the maister's easy flow ;
But, oh, wi' dool within my hairt they burn.
I 've reached Life's lowsin'-time, and hae to go.

I hoasted when the sough o' sorrow fell.
They heard, and left me tremblin' on my knees.
Abune my heid I felt the sab and swell—
My faither's faither planted a' thae trees.
The tane, as fades an auld time-withered flo'er,
In his last passin' crooned the shepherd's psalm ;
The tither, straucht as stands yon Border to'er,
Slipped hamewards wi' a simmer evening's calm.

THE AULD GAIRDENER

Aft in his youthfu' days, on yae strong airm
I cairried him, the sair-misguided laird.
Noo, whae will skep the blithe bees when they swairm?
Ay, whae will maw that bonnie greening swaird?
I see the sun fa' westward braid and lang.
Dootless, like mony mair, I 've had my day.
Oh happy bird that upward lifts the sang!
Ye seem to airt my very soul away.

. . . . . .

Next morn the leddy left the big-hoose door;
The laird he daurna face hairt-broken ire.
Wi' lichtsome hairt she hummed a ballant o'er,
A sooth-made lilt new-fangled to the shire.
But where the whaups in circlin' passion sweep,
And brackens lift their forms in fronded grace,
She fund the auld man in God's hinmaist sleep,
Wi' God's ain sunlicht brekin' on his face.

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THE PLOUGHING MATCH

THE sun was glintin' bonnily abune Kilbucho Mains,
When Aundra Broon cam' east to play his pairt ;
Far up the slope o' Thripland ye heard the ring o' chains,
The black meer prancin' bauldly 'hint the cairt.

It was a bonnie mornin', an' a' the licht o' heaven
Seemed strikin' on the briest o' Biggar toon ;
But to Nature observation the ploo'man wasna' gi'en,
The mornin' held but yae thing—Aundra Broon.

Upon the rigs o' Dreva lang syne he won a cup,
And leeved upon the glory o' that day ;
Sae, saftly on the hilltap, to keep his speerits up,
He hummed a bar or twa o' ' Scots wha hae.'

At merket or at funeral, at roup or Hallow Fair,
His words o' braggin' fell like scourin' rain ;
Sae fu' o' cups was Aundra, at Kirk communin' there
Ye 'd thocht the Holy Vessel was his ain.

But the triumph o' the plooman was in a day lang syne,
And ever since he 'd steadily lost grund ;
He couldna gie the daisied sod the airtist's bonnie twine,
But what he 'd lost in skill he kept through wund !

THE PLOUGHING MATCH

Upon a fifteen-acre field they wrestled a' day lang,
The Laird o' Auchterfaulder heid ower a';
But, frae the very stert o' things, wi' Aundra a' gaed wrang,
The ploo and horses wadna work ava'.

Wi' coaxin' and wi' ṣweerin', he spent fower awfu' 'oors,
The lauchin' halflins gethered at each end;
The fat o' a' was in the fire when, 'tween the sweerin' sho'ers,
Daft Jock his daft-like services wad lend.

The first was Tammas Demster, heid plooman o' the Slack;
The saecond gaed to Geordie o' Glencairns;
But Aundra wasna prizeless, nae man could haud it back—
He held the field wi' thirteen sonsy bairns.[1]

[1] At ploughing matches a prize is invariably given to the ploughman with the largest family.

A MOTHER'S GRIEF

Hoo are they blest wha ken hairt-brekin' sorrow,
An' the lang day that seems to hae nae end?
Whaur, O my God, whaur is the gowden morrow,
The sunlicht 'oor for dool that willna mend?

Yestreen the Tweed frae heather heichts cam' sweepin',
The sheaves o' hairst were helpless in the spate;
I gruppit yin, an' noo the bunch lies dreepin',
A sodden mass beside the gairden gate.

O God, my God, a laddie left Tweed valley,
My only bairn, but O he couldna bide;
For up Tweedsmuir there cam' the sudden rally,
An', wi' fareweel, he left his mither's side.

And noo, and noo, the saut sea waves are flingin'
Their cauldrife blanket ower my holy deid;
O would that I could hear some mavis singin'
Its happy sang abune my laddie's heid!

I 've had nae trokin's wi' a thing ca'd glory:
What mither's hairt kens ocht o' deil-curs'd war?
I only ken Love's hamely, hairtsome story,
And noo that love frae me is sindered far.

A MOTHER'S GRIEF

There is a fauld 'twixt Talla and Tweed river,
An auld kirk-yaird whaur a' life's jowin's cease;
Lord, airt me hame, whaur I may be for ever
In the calm sough o' heaven's eternal peace.

SWEETHEARTS

A WHUSTLIN' laddie new left schule,
A lassie airtin' hame,
Wee Cupid waitin' up the hill—
Love 's aye the same.

I saw a halflin' wi' his lass
Yae nicht when daunnerin' hame;
I heard the lauch an' sly kiss pass—
Love 's aye the same.

A buirdly man ahint the ploo,
A wife to keep the hame,
Fower bonnie bairns, Life's bicker fu'—
Love 's aye the same.

A sunset in a gowden sky,
The twaesome nearly hame,
Anither kiss, a lang guid-bye—
Love 's aye the same.

TO THE DISCIPLES

Oot ower the brig at Merlindale
Lang syne a laddie looked,
But ilk braw troot that whusked its tail
By glowerin' wasna' hooked.
'Twas grand to see them soomin' there,
And filled a callant's een—
Ere they gang birlin' through the air
A something comes atween.

Anither laddie kenned by me,
And mony a yin forby,
Sits braggin' on his faither's knee,
And biggin' to the sky
Thae awfu' castles fu' o' fish,
Aye catched the nicht afore;
But troots they loupna' to the dish,
Nor wander roond the door.

Fu' weel we ken there 's walth o' troots
Lost, by a hair, up Tweed,
An' this the day when nibblin' doots
Fill up a wundy creed.
But troots, like men, hing on till life,
And jouk the barb o' daith,
If ye 've a hame and hairtsome wife,
Troots meybe hae them baith.

TO THE DISCIPLES

It 's daith, daith, daith, on ilka han',
  Wi' laddies and grown men ;
Till Daith gangs reivin' through the lan'
  And soughs up ilka glen.
We daud life oot to haud life in,
  It 's in, and syne it 's oot ;
If murderin' men is coonted sin,
  Then what o' thae puir troot ?

THE COVENANTER'S PRAYER

LIFT me a kennan higher till I see the evenin' sun
Fa' lowin' red yince mair this side the sky ;
For an eerie soond comes to me on the lowsin' o' the wun',
And a voice that tells the saun's are rinnin' dry.
An' herk ! the bonnie singin' breks on the Pentlands bare,
And a haun' soops ower yon snaw-breist like a flame ;
It 's comin', oh, it 's comin', across the drifted muir,
The haun' that lichts the mirk 'twixt me and Hame.

I stood for God, my Shepherd, on the heichts o' Rullion Green,
To keep the bluid-bocht soul o' Scotland free ;
But the rouk o' daith is roond me, and sune wi' steekit een,
I 'll sleep my lang, lang sleep aneath the lea.
Ay ! some this day are weary, and some hae gotten rest,
The saints' dear bluid is seepin' through the snaw ;
The Pentland heichts are lanesome : oh, for the land ower west,
Where straucht frae heaven the soughin' hill-wunds blaw.

THE COVENANTER'S PRAYER

I think I hear the mavis in the auld days lilt its sang,
Whaur the Dippal burn rins saftly doon the glen;
I can feel my hairtstrings lowsenin'—a messenger ere lang
Will airt a deein' Ayrshire shepherd ben.
Steekna' the door though the tempest is ragin' abune Dunsyre,
And the snaw-bree ladened Medwyn fills the ford;
But let a lowe o' gledness shine frae the warm peat fire,
To welcome him that cometh frae the Lord.

The keen sword o' the Cov'nant is steept in bluid this day,
The darkenin' clood o' loss like dreepin' haur
Gaed rowin' 'cross the Pentlands, and like a dark wraith lay,
And the remnant o' the Lord is scattered far.
But the singin' host draws nearer, and a voice comes ower the fell,
And a haun', lang-minded, binds my wounded broo;
Through the waefu', daith-blawn valley I needna walk masel'—
A mither's love, heaven-sent, will lead me through.

When the soul gangs soarin' hameward, and my lippin' cup owerfills,
Far yont where singin' saints their love-trysts keep,
Bear ye the cauld clay westward, and in sicht o' the Ayrshire hills,
'Neath withered brackens hap me in God's sleep.

Some whaup frae Ayrshire muirlands in its wanderin' wheelin' flicht,
May come when rowth o' wild flo'ers roond me wave ;
And weep its fill o' sorrow, and grieve the lang forenicht,
Or rest, till mornin' dawn, nearhaun' my grave.

When the trump o' resurrection soonds clearly through the vale,
When Dunsyre saints frae their lang sleepin' rise,
Ower by the hills o' Ayrshire I 'll send the herd's lood hail,
Syne meet leal freends aneath the cloodless skies.
Lift me a kennan higher. ' Noo, mither, gi'es your haun,'
For I hear far wast the hamely kirk bells ring ;
And yonder, crooned wi' glory, stan's the bonnie Borderlan' :
I 'm comin', Lord, my Maister, and my King.

HIS STRENGTH

I 'm wearied sair wi' the slayin',
Care naething for wealth or fame,
By yon fields whaur the bairns are playin',
It is there that I seek my hame.
I wander soul-held for ever,
Love-lichted by a' things true,
For hame is yer hairt, dear mither,
Its shrine is my love for you.

Last nicht when the stars were swingin'
Their lanterns ower my heid,
And the soughin' winds were singin'
And sabbin' ower the deid,
When the reekin' guns cam roarin'
Till it seemed as if hell brak through,
'Twas hameward my soul gaed soarin';
Strength cam wi' my thochts o' you.

In this waefu' land I am stervin'
For a glimpse o' the cosy glen;
Whaur yer leal hairt stands unswervin',
As ye wrax in love far ben.
The heichts o' Glenholm wi' the heather
Will be purple an' fair enoo.
Ay, mither, aft in my dreamin'
I think on thae hills an' you.

The hairst in the glen will be gaudy,
I hear the swish o' the scythe,
And the sang o' the wee herd laddie,
Yont the pair that I used to drive.
Ay, it 's stey wark here in the slayin'
O' souls neither ripe nor few,
But, mither, in love keep prayin';
God kens that I lean on you.

THE LAST YOKING

Forty odd years I 've held the auld swing-ploo,
Wi' haun's aye steady, and wi' hairt aye bauld;
Nae scart o' mine is seen alang earth's broo,
The lea, weel-happit, cuddles in the fauld.
On this I argied lang at my fire-end,
And held my grund at merket and at fair—
New-fangled moulds aye lack the auld-time bend,
There 's far ower muckle plooin' through the air.

I aye hae mind roond Blyth Brig smiddy fire,
Yae winter's nicht when fields were smoored in snaw,
O' hearin' young Rab Royston frae Dunsyre,
Uphaud a new-boucht ploo wi' unco blaw.
His words were flichty, and gey hard to thole:
Fower years!—and then 'twas a' the kirk-yaird crack
That Rab was flounderin' in an unco hole,
Wi' rigs dung useless, and the rent far back.

We 're sweer to lairn the last bars o' Life's sang,
We 've a' oor fauts, and maybe I 'm age-blin';
But time will tell whilk o' the twae was wrang,
I 've had nae choice but hand my arles in.
For when wi' scorn he gi'ed the half-year's wage,
The maister spak some high-flown words yestreen,
Aboot new ploos, and plooin', and auld age,
That garred a licht come lowpin' to my een.

And sae I 've reached the hinner-end o' May,
At dawn the morn I leave this bonnie place ;
This is the hinmaist yokin' o' my day—
Nae wunner that the tears rin doon my face.
The birds o' God in freenship gether roond,
And in their sangs hae bade a lang guid-bye ;
Wi' stouns o' grief my hairt is nearhaun' drooned,
I never heard sic singin' frae the sky.

The gress grows green and lang on Bralyin Braes,
Where I hae spent the maist pairt o' my years ;
Ay, I had thocht roond here to end my days,
And only shed at daith a wee wheen tears.
Ower Corsin Con the sun comes dribblin' doon,
Its fareweel licht shines on my mither's grave ;
Far up the Hope I hear the Bralyin croon,
Singin' my sorrow, greetin' in ilk wave.

DAUVID'S GENEALOGY

A RISE in prices, wi' a big demand ;
A hairtsome blaw
That soughed a freend intil the better land—
A sudden ca',
Leavin' him murnin' wi' a weel-filled hand,
His ootlay twae-three flo'ers, a braid black band—
Ay ! that was a'.

He laid it oot wi' certainty o' faith,
Grunded on Time.
Gowd boucht him land, an' at the back o' baith
Cam' stane an' lime.
Folk yince could ca' him Dauvid withoot skaith,
But noo they speak wi' reverential braith
O' Maister Syme.

Weel back frae a' he biggit a big hoose,
Wi' railin' roond.
An' frae the burn he cut a muckle sluice,
Whase slatted foond
Jowed water to a pond, whaur graylin' crouse
Jumpit for flees, an' mony a water-moose
Made splashin' soond.

A coat o' airms hanselled the new-fund days
Wi' unco spreed ;
An' roond it a' some braggin' words o' praise,
In tongue lang deid.
For 'oors he 'd stan', no' kennin' what it says,
But thenkfu' for the bonnie Latin phrase
He couldna read.

Sae Dauvid thocht, like mony anither chap,
There 's nane like me ;
An', no' content wi' cockin' on the tap,
He fain wad flee.
Sae for twae wings wherewi' to gie a flap,
Like some mair folk, he sterted to unhap
The faim'ly tree.

He sairched in books ; he brushed the faim'ly flure,
Wi' unco sweep ;
An' a' his forbears in ilk lonely lair
Were haurled frae sleep.
But Dauvid stoppit—for, in Merket Square,
Lang syne they 'd swung a kinsman in the air
For stealin' sheep.

A BORDER ROUP

They stood fower deep alang the auld byre face,
Men o' a' sizes, but o' yae degree.
The cadger cracked the merket wi' His Grace,
The Auld Kirk rubbit shoothers wi' the Free.
A' levelled doon—in yon lang lanky chield
Ye dinna see a man abune the lave!
Ay! but he sings aneath the puppit's bield.
His haun' it is that haps fowk in the grave.

Auld poacher Sandy stan's wi' lēgs ootspread,
And cracks a joke wi' yin he kens ower weel.
The Shirra lauchs, for efter a' is said,
We a' maun leeve, an' if fowk didna' steal
The Shirra, decent man, withoot a doot
Wad find himsel', like Sandy, oot o' wark.
Stervation whiles turns guid fowk inside oot—
The jidge he micht turn poacher in the dark.

But whae is this they 're helpin' on a chair?
See hoo he stan's weel-balanced on his legs!
A sough o' Kings is in that lordly air,
He 's drunk his ain guid health doon to the dregs.
And what a voice! it rings ower a' the closs
'Bring oot the filly,' an' he asks for bodes.
The glen is watchfu', isna here for loss.
He asks for twenty pounds, but nae yin nods.

' This is a filly, no' an auld dune horse,'
When canny Tammas offered seeven pounds ten.
Man, what a po'er ! it bate a' for its force,
Aneath that hammer-han' he hauds the glen.
Meybe it was the bottle handed roon',
And, somehoo, Tammas fund it aye his airt.
It 's cheap at roups—for twenty an' a croon
They tied the loupin' filly to Tam's cairt.

The words cam' flowin' like a miller's lade.
The ferm stock melted like the weel-wat snaw.
Pate Broon, the elder, grupped a broken spade,
He maun hae gi'en a nod at hammer-fa'.
Ye daurna look the airt o' that deep voice,
For that look cost ye saxpence ilka time.
The laird, e'en though a laird, was left nae choice :
He hoasted—an' it bocht a hod for lime.

The Factor stood weel back frae a' the crood,
Faced by a wee chap yammerin' for repairs,
Wha banged his neive, an' crackit unco lood,
Aboot some pent, and potty for the stairs.
He raised an airm to send his sermon hame,
It was eneuch—there soonded ower the crush
The voice o' yin mair po'erfu' in the same,
' If ye 've nae pent, dod, man, ye 've aye a brush.'

A wean's bed gaed to Baxter o' the Haugh,
Whase merrit days were never blessed wi' bairns.

And syne Rab Weir, wha led the hairty lauch,
Bocht, wi' that lauch, a pair o' auld ploo airns.
I thocht it time, like Lot's bauld wife, to flee;
She lookit back—Ay! that was just my faut.
Like Lot, puir man, the hale thing cam' to me.
He got a wifefu'—I 've a seck o' saut.

THE CALLANT

Wi' bended heid he sat beside the yett,
The faither's hairt within him steeped in care ;
He fummelled lang, but words were dreich to net,
An' syne he stammert oot this broken prayer—
' Ca' canny, Lord, wi' oor puir wastrife bairn,
Whase halflin days were draigled sair wi' shame ;
Haud licht yer han'—but, oh, the hairt maun lairn
The dool that hunkers in the neuk o' hame.'

They foucht far yont on stey an' bluidy braes,
But here in quaiteness Tammas spent the day ;
Nearhaun' a mavis lilted oot its praise,
But, deid to a', he heardna the sweet lay.
His lyart locks like threeds o' sorrow lie,
The streekit broo was scored wi' bygane sin ;
His thochts were lang until he heard the cry—
' He 's airtin' hard oot-ower the braes o' whin.'

The auld man swept the broodin' frae his hairt,
Wi' ootspread loof he watched whaur postie cam' ;
It maittered nocht whae took the callant's pairt,
Love kens the fauld that bields the strayin' lamb.
It wasna ' Whae had warstled oot heid first ? '
But ' Is the laddie aye abune the grun' ? '
He got his news, an' frae his soul there burst
The langsyne cry o' dool, ' My son, my son.'

Sae is it ever sae in this droll world,
Ill-daein' folk set gaun the bleeze o' war;
And in the lowe ilk God-made life is hurled,
But whae can stap the bleedin' o' the scar?
And what o' them on aither side the strife,
Whae credled weans on ilka lovin' knee?
The mither's cry gangs heavenward wi' her life,
'Oh, bairn o' mine, wad I had gane wi' thee.'

THREE BORDER HERDS

THREE herds were trainin' hamewards, it maitters na' frae where,
Three canny chiels wha in their native glen
Were maistly rowed in silence, an' ever thinkin' there
Lang thochts on hillstock an' Life's hinner-en'.

Herds are the saut o' honesty, within oor gey wairsh life,
There 's joy in what folk ca' the heather-clamp.
Of coorse at times a' men are weak—jist ask yer ain gudewife,
Braw fine she kens when her saut's drawin' damp.

Be 't as it may, I 'd trust a herd 'bune ony leevin' man,
Wi' sterlin' worth his hairt is weel inlaid.
There 's only yae thing comes to me that disna seem to plan—
I doot he 's pairted wi' his auld grey plaid.

Twae o' the three o' whilk I tell were in the best o' form,
The dram had raised an unco sough o' wun'.
The third was in the farthest end, weel-backit frae the storm,
In crack, puir chap, he 'd lang syne lost his grun'.

Twae bonnie dowgs upon the flure seemed listenin'
to the crack.
Their po'ers 'mang hill-sheep seemed the endless
text;
For in the heavin's o' the storm they set their fower
ears back,
Syne let them doon, an' lookit up gey vexed.

For wonders on the braes o' Scaur Tam kept his ain
'Tweed' up,
But Geordie shook his heid in wutherin' scorn.
'I 'll tak' ye on,' he snickered, 'an', wi' this brindled
pup,
I 'll rin the sooplest collie ever born.'

'Aweel, aweel,' said Tammas; 'but mind ye, Geordie
Sma',
There 's nane in a' the glen to match this breed.
Ay! but, my puir auld chappie, ye 're the hinmaist
o' them a'.'
An' Tammas wept some maudlin tears ower
'Tweed.'

But frae the ither corner a voice was heard to speak.
'Nae Border dowg can lick my bonnie "May."
I set the lass ower Meggat yae mornin' o' last week,
An' roond that hill she 's rinnin' till this day!'

THE ROLL CALL

This nicht I sit beside an ootgaun fire,
  Laddie an' bairn o' mine ;
While on the riggin' o' the wastmost byre
  A mavis whustles fine,
Airtin' its sang as if it couldna tire,
An' wi' its ballants fillin' a' the swyre
  That hauds this hame o' thine.

Ay, whae can tell the chappin' o' the 'oor,
  That ca's the wanderer hame ?
The liftin' o' heaven's sneck is yont oor poo'er :
  I heard it a' the same.
An' through the lirk strange voices made me coo'er,
That, soondin' thrice far yont the din an' stour,
  Cried oot my laddie's name.

Thrice has it cam' like soughin' wunds that meet,
  An' ding the brainches sair,
An' on my broo I fin' the clammy sweit
  Brek like a hillburn there ;
An', wheesht ! I hear the tramp o' war-worn feet,
That, airtin' hame, gang dunner on the street,
  By peacefu' biggin's fair.

Nae words will come, my hairt gangs ben to pray.
Oh! is he mairchin' by?
They 've stoppit, man by man, as brek o' day
Fa's ower God's simmer sky.
An' frae the lang straucht line sae far away,
As Gabriel's trump comes crashin' doon the brae,
I hear his answerin' cry.

TO A MITHER

'CUDDLE ye close in my airms, dear bairn,
Oh! cuddle in.
For the wund blaws wearily ower the cairn,
But it winna hairm ye, my bonnie bairn,
If ye cuddle in.'

Sae the mither sang to her greetin' wean,
That wadna sleep.
And the daudin' wunds brocht the seepin' rain,
But the mither in love held the waukrife wean,
Till it drapped asleep.

Sae is yer love, an' sae is yer God,
The hale road hame.
Oh lippen to Him yer hairt-brekin' load,
He 'll cairry it for ye, the dear, dear God,
An' bring ye hame.

Oh! dinna ye see it then a' in a',
In that bonnie bairn?
Ye 're God to him, an' he 's sleepit awa—
Sae in His love the dear Lord faulds a',
Mither, an' bairn.

HAUD UP YER HAIRT

THE man that wad through ragin' waters soom,
Wha 'd see a sperk o' licht far yont the gloom,
An' hae in life a wee bit stannin' room,
Hauds up his heid.

. . . . . .

Sae when the daudin' wunds come flappin' doon,
An' coup ootower Life's shoggly, cadgin' cairt,
Ne'er fash yersel'—a penny 's no' a croon.
Haud up yer hairt.

Ay! ay! nae doot advice is easy gi'en.
A hand-wave 's a', an' syne we hae the airt.
It 's easy crack for folk whase hoose is bein.
Haud up yer hairt.

But what o' them whase bonnet hauds their a'?
Weel, if we 've little, lichtly wi 't we 'll pairt.
Life canna aye be yae onding o' snaw.
Haud up yer hairt.

Fu' days and toom slip through ilk shakin' han';
Some tak' it easy, ithers jouk an' dairt.
Wi' canny steps we 'll daunner through the lan'.
Haud up yer hairt.

They're gane, we 're gaun, to be wi' freends lang syne.
Daith wales the weary frae Life's crooded mairt.
Sae let us tramp the causey-heid o' Time
Wi' lichtsome hairt.

BURNS AND FREEDOM

'LEEZE me on drink,' cried yin wha sang lang syne,
Ilk Scottish singer fairly oot o' braith,
Whase cup was lippin' fu' o' freends an' wine
For yae short 'oor—then laneliness, an' daith.

I hear ye, Robbie, sabbin' oot yer hairt,
Debt hingin' like a curse abune yer heid,
Nae yin in a' the world to tak' yer pairt,
Or skale a cup o' kindness in yer need.

But ye hae airted yont whaur fowk seek rest,
An', dod, ye werena gane for unco lang
When this droll world had ca'ed ye o' the best,
An' fell to croonin' ower ilk bonnie sang.

I 'm listenin', Robbie, as ye wrax frae heaven,
An', oh, yer voice comes like the sough o' God:
'For Scotland's sake my soul up here is riven;
Tak' tent, tak' tent, I cam' that staney road.

'Tak' tent, for yince I thocht that freedom's name
Was tethered to the curse I sit an' mourn;
Oh! would my feet could speel the braes o' hame!
Oh! that the days lang syne could be reborn!

' For I wad sing anither sang doon there ;
  Heaven's braith o' love wad set the grander tune,
But wae is me, I can return nae mair,
  Oh ! for yae day beside the banks o' Doon ! '

' Yae day, dear God,' I heard the singer speer—
  ' Gie me yae 'oor, e'en though it be my last.'
But as he spak' the angels hurried near ;
  Took Robbie ben, an' shut heaven's wundae fast.

True, Robbie, true, this world taks mony turns ;
  We 've little breid, but walth o' drink this day,
An' at twae ends the soul o' freedom burns ;
  Whusky is yin—the ither ' Scots wha hae.'

TWEEDSIDE

February 1917

Up Tweed enoo the muckle heichts are cappit,
The Wormel weers cauld winter like a wraith;
An' ilka hill-burn, 'neath the snaw-drift happit,
Is rinnin' slow an' pantin' sair for braith.

In far Tweedsmuir the sheep are on hand-feedin',
The Blackfaced breed are doon frae Dollar Law.
Puir beasts, they kenned when frost 's the cauldrife cleedin'
It 's useless scrapin' on the ice-bund snaw.

The auld herd looks the hill-face ilka mornin'—
It 's weary wark for yin whase day is dune.
He sprauchles on, sair pains an' auld age scornin',
An' lauchs, an' thinks nae man can weer his shune.

Young Rab, his son, fechts on the fields o' Flanders,
An' syne he fechts on Meggat's snawy braes;
Wi' stotterin' strides by the laich end he daunders,
'Mang scenes he kenned in his first herdin' days.

'I 'll haud the hill against oor Rab's returnin','
Sic bauld-like thochts rise in the auld man's hairt,
And, as yon sun frae heaven in love fa's burnin',
So in the glen he acts a manly pairt.

The weans at nichtfa' on his knees are speelin';
His son's ain namesake fu' o' bairnish gab.
But syne they 're bedded, an' the auld herd 's kneelin',
An', faither-like, lifts up a prayer for Rab.

O men o' war, the bairns for you are greetin';
Heaven speed the dawnin' o' the happy day,
When at the door-cheek lovin' hairts are meetin',
An' flo'ers are burstin' on the Gowan Brae.

When ye return God grant the birds be singin',
An' Blackfaced sheep gaun hillwards by the score,
The heather to the braes o' hame be clingin',
An' yer auld faither waitin' at the door.

A GLIMPSE O' HAME

The craws are on the stibble fields, anither hairst is hame,
The autumn gowd is glintin' on the leaves,
But oh! my fechtin' laddie, the glen is no' the same,
Wi' daith sae busy stookin' at the sheaves.

Yestreen 'twas Marget's laddie; last week the Laird's son fell,
An' noo, my bonnie bairn, ye 're wounded sair.
The Book o' Revelation has an unco screed on hell;
I doot it 's little better wi' ye there.

The roses in yer gairden, lad, have blossomed unco fine,
The Glorie, at the hoose-end, cowed them a'.
But three years come next Mairtinmas—God keep this hairt o' mine,
Ye mairched away wi' ithers through the snaw.

I 'm waken late an' airly; I ken it 's unco wrang
To sit the lang forenicht, an' think, an' greet.
But oh, my bonnie laddie, what hairt could raise a sang
That canna hear the soond o' weel-kenned feet?

The leaves are drappin' in the glen, as draps that ither rain
In that wild land across the jowin' sea,
Whaur doon ablow the clayey grund sae mony lie their lane,
That yince were credled on a mither's knee.

My bairn, the Lord oor Shepherd is—yer faither lang syne deid,
Himsel' a herd was shairly bund to ken,
For ere he left the mirky vale he raised his weary heid,
An' whispered o' a licht within the glen.

Guidness an' mercy frae the Lord will shepherd a' oor days,
An' sae I 've watched an' prayed the hale nicht through,
An', wi' the morn, ootby I hear a trustfu' robin's praise,
That lippens a' its wee hairt singin' fu'.

THE DIPPING

Doon frae the hills they brocht the blackfaced breed,
The yelpin' dowgs fendin' them ower the muirs.
Rab Johnston's 'Turk,' lang dune, could mak nae speed.
'Sic useless tykes should aye be wrocht in pairs'—
Sae spak the herd frae up Drumtorland glen,
For thochts on sheep an' kirks excelled by nane,
He aye looked laich stannin' 'mang ither men,
But touch on doctrine, and he to'ered his lane.

Some said that Paitrick meddled wi' a dram,
But be this sae he maun hae wrocht wi' care,
For he 'd the quaitness o' a half-bred lamb,
When trampin' glenwards to the Hoose o' Prayer.
They a' stepped back to let the elder through,
He wasna Paitrick Tamson on that morn,
Na! na! some langsyne licht shone frae his broo,
On siccan days he seemed a chield new-born.

But at a clippin', in his workin' claes,
He had a tongue for nippyness unkenned.
There wasna muckle that a saint could praise,
When Paitrick sterted oot fowks' fauts to mend.
He waved it frae him, ilka offered drink—
The scornfu' elder o' Drumtorland Kirk!
What could herds dae but girn, an' gie a wink,
Aye mindin' o' the bottle 'hint a birk.

Throughoot this day the herds in quaiteness tholed
The endless clatter o' this lairnèd chap,
Wha, for their guid, had ilka yin weel holed,
And, mind ye, wasna seen to drink a drap.
When Eleck Baxter's pipe fell 'mang the tar,
Though Paitrick snuffed—it couldna be a sin !—
'Twas aye his wey to splairge quaite fowk wi' glaur—
' Ay, Eleck, that 's a jidgment frae abune.'

And Eleck soucht for lang in ilka pooch,
But ne'er an aixtrae pipe-shank met his han',
He wraxed ilk leg, an' syne he 'd forrit crooch,
But for that day the last reek he had blawn.
When words were spak aboot the cleansin' po'er
O' kirks an' siclike, Eleck's wordy grip
Brak through a' boonds—' Man, hev ye nae left scour
For mackit souls, like yours, sair needin' dip ? '

TWEED

THERE 's a gleam on yer briest, dear river,
Whaur the pebbles line the shore,
And yer sang fa's sweet as ever,
As hame the waters pour;
And the sunlicht o' the mornin'
Frae heaven comes brekin' through,
Wi' its gowden licht adornin'
The howms that shelter you.

I can feel the sough o' the glory
O' days that hae slippit past,
And left but an auld-warld story
O' things that couldna last.
Ay! there 's mony a bonnie biggin'
That watched ye ripplin' by,
Noo lifts an auld dune riggin'
'Neath yonder simmer sky.

There 's a lave in yer hairtsome rinnin'
That speaks o' that ither land,
Whaur fowk, sair fashed wi' their sinnin',
Stepped hame ayont daith's strand.
And aften my hairt fa's dreamin',
And is airted far away,
When the lichted starns are gleamin',
And mirk creeps roond the day.

'TWEEN CLYDE AND TWEED

There 's a wee spring set in a hallow,[1]
  Whaur the laverocks pipe their sangs,
Ower rigs that are ever fallow,
  And peace for ever hangs.
It is there 'mang the gresses swingin',
  Wi' the mornin' dreipin' doon,
Abune the lark's gled singin'
  I can hear yer waters croon.

[1] Tweed Well.

THE ELDER

He slips gey canny through ' The Nick,' a slap nearby Cardon,
His pipe lost 'mang the bourack o' his baird ;
Ye wadna gie three braw half-croons for a' that he has on,
An' yet that bauchlin' body is a laird.

He graips wi' caution ilka step alang Glenhichton braes ;
The bonnie leddy o' the starry sky
Has hunkered doon for guid this nicht, an' darksome grow the ways—
Ye canna see the wee burn rinnin' by.

Wi' mony aiths Tam warsells on ; the sabbin' waves o' Tweed
Ayont the knowe croon ower the auld-world sang ;
Ay, mair than Tam has felt the stoun', where haughs fa' weel abrede,
An' Rachan wuds in Spring wi' glories hang.

The 'prentice callant hauds the torch, the salmon seeks the glare,
The eldership maun wait anither day ;
The haun' that wraxed the ladle lang within the Hoose o' Prayer
Noo sairches for anither kind o' prey.

Nae words are spak, at brek o' morn, a whustle does it a'
Ootside a study wundae near the road :
A saintly haun' is slippit oot, an' grups a salmon braw,
Acknowledged yae day later by a nod !

An' ilk back-end a sermon drones, wi' fishin' jammin' fu',
A weel-worn sough wi' age in ilka line ;
Tam nods his approbation, syne wunners if it 's true,
That awfu' tak' the elders had lang syne.

SOUTER TAM

'CANNY and slow,' was Souter Tam's yae phrase,
A mill-lade fu' wi' hurly-gushin' flow,
That turned the happer o' his earthly days
To the auld soughin' sang—canny an' slow.

He pu'd an' peched at herds' an' pleuchman's buits,
Men a' but barefit haud to tak' his No!
Or, efter waitin' lang, wi' sair misfits
They 'd trevel, hirplin' hame—canny an' slow.

The toon-bred carles their wrathfu' kneeves wad bang;
But as they cam', so Tammas let them go.
He peyed his wey wi' the auld threedbare sang,
'Sic things will richt theirsels—canny an' slow.'

'Twas worth yin's while to pree the Hoose o' Prayer,
To hear the souter's basso saft an' low,
As 'neath the puppit's broo, wi' unctuous air,
He raised auld Dauvid's psalms—canny an' slow.

He streetched his grup to a' things that were gaun,
Some spak o' greed, but hoo could that be so?
'Twas but the roset on the souter's han'
That stack to a' things gude—canny an' slow.

He diggit graves ; an' rang the Auld Kirk bell ;
He howked in gairdens ; fished wi' salmon roe ;
An' when Bob Broon, the wricht, passed yont himsel',
The souter kisted Bob—canny an' slow.

But Daith spak hairsely in a sair alairm,
' That chap 'll jouk me in the warl' below.'
Sae, stoopin' doon, he grupped Tam by the airm,
An' syne convoyed him hame—canny an' slow.

IN KILBUCHO KIRKYARD

Grasses briest-high aroond me wave,
And underneath my feet
The glen forgethers, an' the lave
Are trysted here to meet,
Whaur a wimplin' burn sings near by hame
A sang wi' mem'ries sweet.

The hills come tummlin' frae the lift,
The larks mount frae the braes,
And angels in the cloods that drift
Are herkenin' to their praise.
Leal hairts wait here in their lang hame
For resurrection days.

Saft is the happin' ower each briest,
A stane-dyke faulds them roond,
They 're bielded when the winds blaw east
By hills wi' glory crooned.
Here lang syne freends have airted hame,
An', oh, their sleep is soond.

The schule-room door is steekit fast;
Daith cried the maister ben.
The laddies watched him cairried past,
An' noo thae weans are men
Plooin' the cley-bund rigs o' hame
Within this peacefu' glen.

A roofless biggin', oh, my hairt,
  Stans in this auld kirkyaird,
Whaur, in God's earth, there is yae pairt
  For dyker an' for laird.
But noo, like weary bairns, they 're hame
  An' happit 'neath the swaird.

THE DYING WEAVER

LIFE's feenished wab is in yer haun's, and, God,
I 'll tramp the treadle o' this world nae mair.
For through the mirk, this nicht I 'll tak the road,
And lang ere mornin' I 'll be wi' ye there.

The clitter-clatter o' the by-gane years
Soonds far awa to yin that 's doomed to dee.
Ower-by in heaven ilk rig in gowd appears,
The sunlicht hame that 's waitin' there for me.

Haud high the licht, O God, abune my soul,
For oh, the oot-gaun wey is dark an' lang.
The burn 's in spate ; its drummly waters roll,
But through it a' I seem to hear a sang.

I 've poached, an' leed, an' drucken maist my days,
Ill-used the hairt ye gi'ed me for my ain ;
My feet hae slippet aft on sin's rough ways,
An' noo I 'm waitin' here for daith alane.

The threeds hae drappit, an' the wab is spyled.
But, God, hae mercy for yer dear Son's sake ;
Though here, doon-by, my hands His wark hae fyled,
A bruised sauch the Maister willna break.

At airly morn the fowk will gether roond
The wabster's door in neebourly dismay ;
They 'll weary waitin' ere they hear yae soond,
For lang ere mornin' I 'll be far away.

FLITTIN'

We 've flitted maist oor days,
  Kirsty an' me ;
Ken a' the gipsies' ways,
  Frae Forth to Dee.
My life is maistly spent
Peyin' a half-'ear's rent :
We 'll sune be in a tent,
  Kirsty an' me.

Nae peace on earth hae I,
  Geordie M'Minn ;
Flittin 's nae suner by,
  An' kail plants in,
When Kirsty tak's the grou
At something auld or new,
Dod, I am flittin'-fu',
  Geordie M'Minn.

We landed at Strathmore,
  Pechin' up-hill ;
No' weel within the door,
  The wife turned ill.
She willna lest it here,
But grummle a' half-'ear,
Syne ye 'll see cairt an' meer,
  Backin' doon-hill.

I 'm auld ayont my years,
  Flitted to daith,
An' no' yin gi'en to tears :
  Jist short o' braith.
I hev a guid airm-chair,
But seldom I sit there,
It 's maistly in the air :
  Flitted to daith.

Kirsty, when will ye sit
  At peace doon-by?
What deil aye gars ye flit
  Ere pent be dry?
If langer roond ye rin,
Ye 'll hae me, George M'Minn,
Kisted, and flitted in
  For gude up-by.

THE LANG ROAD

It winds through a nick on Glenhichton's broo,
The road that leads to the vale o' rest,
That hauds in its peace the gethered few,
The fowk my hairt lo'es best.
They 're hame lang syne—by yon windin' road
We cairried them west to the fauld o' God.

Up by yon brae at the blithesome morn
I hae watched the lark, till ayont the blue
Its sang to me seemed a sang new-born,
Clood-hidden frae my view.
But I wistna then, for a laddie's road
Is ower hairt-thrang for lang thochts o' God.

I mind me still o' the bonnie bells,
Blue as the een that looked in mine,
The flo'ers that bent on Kilbucho Fells
To kiss thae feet o' thine.
'Twas then, dear lass, by love's tender road,
Ye led my hairt 'mang the hills o' God.

And noo an auld grey shepherd waits,
Weary, and dune, and langin' sair
For the fauldin' back o' the gowden gates,
And the sough o' hill-lands fair.
Oh, lass o' mine, by yon lang, lang road,
I 'm comin' hame to yer love, and God.

A TWEED HERD'S THOCHTS

Fower months the day, and I was on the road
To clip the yowes that feed on Brochton Braes.
Fower months—an' noo I 'm far frae hame an' God,
I hear the guns, but no' the linties' praise.

I mind that morn, the sunrise ower Green Law,
The sweet hairt-fillin' croon o' Stirkfield Burn,
The belt o' hawthorn like a wreath o' snaw,
Green hills, and peace, wi' hame at ilka turn.

A lassie's lilt fell sweet across the scaur,
Ahint the kye the lass gaed singin' hame.
I mind it here, where dour, hairt-brekin' war
Uphauds, they say, oor country's righteous name.

Aweel, so be it, it is no' for me
A sodger to redd up the ins an' oots.
I hae nae hope that freedom's roostit key
Will ever turn the lock bolt o' my doots.

I was a herd, nae man e'er ca'ed me in
When they were canglin' in a land oot-ower.
The squabble sterted, an' I had to rin,
Nae bield for man or beast in sic a scowr.

A TWEED HERD'S THOCHTS

My soul is dreepin', God o' my richt han'!
  Yince stainless save to ease a deein' yowe,
Hoo will it be, when I am ca'ed to stan'
  Yae day ayont daith's soondless, freendless howe?

Oh bonnie, bonnie, is the vale o' Tweed!
  Far frae this waefu' country fu' o' loss,
Where nae sheep hirsel on the hill-taps feed,
  Nor mavis sings abune its bed o' moss.

Fower months the day, and I was on the hill,
  In that dear land where a' the guid days lie.
Fower months the morn—we kenna God's dear will,
  I may be hame ayont yon stretch o' sky.

THE BURN EDGE

I THOCHT the burn a river then,
  Frae shore to shore a sea;
But maist o' life was yont my ken,
  As it maun ever be.
Syne goupin' fears, ower laddie years,
Brak frae the reivin' world on me.

Noo here within a reekie toon,
  I gaunt through ilka day,
But oh the burly canna' droon
  Yer ripplin' doon yon brae.
I close my een, and a' is seen,
The burn edge, and the guddler's play.

Yestreen a big herd speered the road
  Alang the causeyed street;
I pointed north, and gied a nod,
  To guide his wannered feet.
The chackit plaid hairtstoundin's made,
I spakna, for my een were weet.

A sprig o' heather, sent frae hame,
  Lies on this prented page,
And syne yer roarin' doon the kaim,
  As noo my hairtstrings rage.
That lintie kenned, I lang syne penned,
The dool and hairtbrek o' a cage.

THE BURN EDGE

Sae let me daunner quaitely where
  The strath lies faulded west;
For to the hairt that 's langin' sair,
  Auld things are unco blest.
Sae hame I 'll gang, and hear the sang
That by the burn edge croons its rest.

THE WHITE ROSE O' REMEMBRANCE

A WHITE rose at a gable end
  Brocht a' things back to me—
The auld toon at the river's bend,
  The splashin' o' the restless sea,
The dool, the dool ye canna mend,
  Oh! sabbin' sea.

He sailed away yae mornin' tide,
  I watched him frae the brae.
The bairns were greetin' at my side.
  The fishers' sang fell ower the bay—
That sang, that sang, I couldna bide,
  Oh! Berwick Bay.

He 'd ta'en a white rose frae the wa',
  To dress my raven hair.
Its petals white as driven snaw
  Lay bedded, but the thorns were sair;
That morn, that morn, like grief's doonfa',
  They jaggit sair.

Dool took me frae the Border toon,
  The waves I couldna dree.
Oh! rose in glory lookin' doon,
  What sang comes frae yon far-off sea?
'He 's gane! he 's gane!' the saut waves croon,
  Oh! sabbin' sea.

THE GANGAREL

In a quarry neuk, on a bing o' stanes
He had kinneled a bleezin' fire,
An' streekit his auld and weary banes,
On the mairch o' a Border shire:
Wi' stockened feet to the bonnie bleeze,
And grey heid propped on a sod,
An' the wund that crooned in the bendin' trees,
The sang o' the open road.

I fund him there when the Lord's ain day
Drew on till the evenin' fa',
Whaur a hedge o' thorn by the Border way,
Kepped the wunds that westward blaw.
A reekit can, wi' a weel-bashed rim,
Sat coggled amang the lowes,
An' the scented reek through the firs that clim'
Blew wanderin' ower the knowes.

'I hae trampit east, I hae wandered west,'
The auld gangarel spak to me.
'Frae Thornhill braw, in her vale o' rest,
To auld Berwick by the sea.
I ken the grey Peels ilka yin,
That stan' crumlin' by the Tweed,
By the Abbey wa' I hae slept tear-blin',
Where Wattie Scott lies deid.

' Yince, only yince, I gaed wanderin' sooth,
And crossed by the Cheviot gate.
But oh, the grippin' o' my soul's drooth,
That Northumberlan' couldna quaite!
I ne'er closeit an e'e till auld Jethart's wa's
Stood braw in the mornin' flame.
When the sunlicht fell on the Teviot's shaws,
I kenned I had landed hame.

' I hae it a', though this pock o' mine
Hauds little o' warldly gear.
The lease o' life frae the han' divine
Is a' we daur look for here.
The laird owerby may ken safter ways,
An' ne'er sleep 'neath a quarry knowe,
But his Lord an' mine coonts oot baith oor days
By the licht o' Life's flickerin' lowe.

' Guid-nicht. God bless ye. Thenk ye, sir,
Ne'er peety yin sic as I,
For I hae a bield 'neath this wavin' fir,
An' the stars are in yonder sky.
It 's little odds to the herkenin' soul,
What titles hing flappin' roun',
This nicht I may hear the heaven-sangs roll,
The laird never catch a soun'.'

THE BORDER GIPSY KING'S PASSING

LICHTLY the leaves on the briest o' the earth are drappin',
Sae let the ripe yins fa'.
They 'll be ower him the late autumn's gowden happin',
That kenned nae biggit ha',
Whae heard yestreen, ay, abune the burn's sweet lappin',
The last—the hameward ca'.

' Summon the clan, for the morn up abune is brekin',
For me that am their king.
It 's yont earth's boonds, and hame I maun sune be trekin',
Like a blackcock on the wing.
When I far yont the gates o' yon land am sneckin',
Ye 'll be the gipsy king.'

Sae spak the chief, an' passed when laich wunds were sweepin',
And sunset filled the sky.
And I his son, Rob Faa, my lang vigil keepin'
Wi' my sons stannin' by,
Closed his twae een, as the mirk ower the muir was creepin',
And stars brak oot on high.

In Blackwell Tryst, in the fauld where a love unendin'
Broods ower the heron's lair,
Where a caller well whase briest to the lips is sendin'
The crystal waters fair,
There, streekit east, the king wi' the peat earth blendin'—
John Faa lies sleeping there.

He 's sleepin' soond, where the hare an' the deer gang boondin',
And storms in winter rave;
A ring o' Fir in that lane, lane place surroondin',
Their brainches gently wave.
In daith's mirk nicht, an' for the hairt's sair woundin',
The birds sing ower his grave.

Lichtly the leaves on the briest o' the earth are lyin',
An' some are ripe to fa'.
Through the bare beech trees I can hear the laich whispered sighin'
O' soughin' wunds that blaw.
He heard yestreen, ay, abune the whaups' wild cryin',
The last—the hameward ca'.

THE POET

THIRTY years come the month o' June—
I mind it till a day—
The yellow-yites were in unco tune,
The meadows fu' o' hay.
And I, a strappin' sonsy chield,
Mawed in the meadow there,
And rakin' thrang the clover field,
A lass wi' gowden hair.

At the ootgaun o' that bonnie year,
I gied that lass the ca';
Some thocht I wasna blate to speer
A quean that looked sae braw.
But I had prospects then in view,
O' fermin' for mysel;
He de'ed—that freend wi' promise fu',
But ne'er a bawbee fell!

We moved intil the muckle toon,
For better, or for waur;
Where nae yin seemed to care a croon
For them that gifted are.
I telled them o' my prospects gane,
My skill at thinnin' neeps;
Frae lauchin' toon-folk 's ill to spane,
Their gigglin' constant dreeps.

Sae Nannie she took to a shop,
I to the poet's thrang;
And noo the lauchin' toon-folk stop,
And speer, 'Was yon your sang?'
Sic is the po'er o' risin' fame!
It meets me at a' turns;
I unnerstan' there 's jist yae name
Linked wi' the Poet Burns!

It 's easier far than milkin' kye,
Or warslin' in a drain,
To gie a cast alang the sky,
When ye are a' yer lane;
Syne write it doon wi' pen an' ink.
Grand is this wark o' mine!
I daunner roond—dae nocht but think—
The shop is peyin' fine!

THE DOCTOR

WHAE 's that chappin' at the door o' my hairt?
Whae is 't? whae is 't?
That trevelled a lang, dreich, weary airt,
Skill-blest, skill-blest.
Some folk thocht he had lost the road:
Ah! but *they* kennedna the wey to God,
An' noo he lies sleepin' aneath the sod,
Sair missed, sair missed.

Ay, but the herd folk up Tweed they ken
It a', it a';
Mind his sair warslin' through muir an' glen,
In cauld an' snaw.
Rugged an' grand like oor michty hills,
Lown as the saft simmer wund that stills,
He lo'ed us, healed us. Love owerfills,
An' covers a'.

Whae 's that chappin' at the gateway o' hame?
Wark-sair, wark-sair.
Yin that on earth we 'll can never name
Nae mair, nae mair.
He 's gane where the healin' burns rin strang,
By heaven's hairtsome meedows, braid an' lang,
In the lown laich fauldin' o' sun an' sang,
He 's there, he 's there.

THE KIRK 'MANG BORDER HILLS

I canna name them a', but oh! to me
They are the best things God has ever made.
For when I 'm weary, and wad rest awee,
I find that rest on hill-lands stey an' braid,
And lown, laigh glens, where His ain han' has laid
The wild flo'ers on the lea.

When wabbit wi' the lang dreich hill o' care,
That aye gets steyer as the years rowe roond;
When I hae tholed, till I can thole nae mair;
My langin' hairt, wooed wi' the bonnie soond
O' rinnin' water, breks through ilka boond,
And oh! I maun be there!

And in yon glen, hemmed in wi' Border Hills,
I ken a kirk whase roof 's the spreadin' sky.
The mossgrown flure, flo'er-drest, this valley fills.
I worship there—the heichts that roond me lie,
The temple wa's—the hillburn rinnin' by,
The wee, saft voice that stills.

Until the 'oor chaps oot Life's lang fareweel,
And I 'm for hame, gie me Thy peace, O God.
It 's a' I crave, wi' strength eneuch to speel
The brae that leads me by the Howslack road,
And see the flo'ers yince mair brek through the sod,
And in the auld glen kneel.

GEORDIE'S EPISTLE

Dear Jock, when yon big German cloored my heid,
Doon by at Arras on last Hogmanay,
When I was cairried doon the line for deid,
I hadna muckle braith wherewi' to pray.
But my auld faither's constitution stood me weel,
An' wraxed me frae the girnin' jaws o' daith,
I 'm dootfu' if my legs could dance a reel;
But, och! I 'm thenkfu' that I hae them baith.

They shaved my croon—I think I see yer smile,
An' hear ye chucklin', 'They 'd hae rowth to shave.'
Syne rowed my heid in cloots weel drooked in ile,
An' wiled yer auld freend frae an airly grave.
Bowls o' beef tea a wee nurse handed roon',
Wi' whiles a tastin' o' the rale Auld Kirk,
There 's nane sae healin' for a war-bashed croon—
I mean the hinmaist, no' the pat-brewed stirk.

To help a lang screed to an airly close,
I 'm weel eneuch to work at orra wark;
For noo I 'm waled to work for bed and brose,
Frae airly morn till gloamin' brings the dark.
We 'cairry on,' ay, cairry on ower lang;
It 's sair, sair wark I tell ye mawin' hay,
A sodger seems a man by-ordinar' strang,
A State-erected scythe for gaun a' day.

When I was bookit for the wark on lan',
Man, Jock, I thocht my fechtin' days were past,
That I, yer freend, bare-heided noo, could stan'
An' draw the lang, deep braith o' peace at last.
That first gled mornin' at the back o' five
I chappit at a ferm door, unco blate,
A' things inside were bummin' like a hive,
The maister cam', an' glowered, an' roared, 'Ye 're late.'

A plate o' parritch, like a poultice auld,
Was set upon a *Scotsman* on a stane.
Dod, man, the parritch poultice was richt cauld;
It seemed to freeze me to the very bane.
We threshed a wee, an' then I clarted byres,
Until the hey oot-by had cast the dew,
Syne aff we gaed to where twae bonnie shires
Met on yae field, an' there the scythe we drew.

Nicht cam' at last, a weary man was I,
Wi' jist yae langin'—that was rest, dear Jock.
I speered the fermer where I had to lie;
Wi' horny han' he handed me a pock.
'Fill that wi' strae,' said he, 'an' clap ye doon
Ahint the nowt, we 've nae mair beds to spare.'
Sae, Jock, I laid my auld beld-heided croon
Aside the kye, an' tholed a sair nicht there.

But wi' the morn I handed back the bed
  Wi' words, ye ken, that canna stan' han'-write.
I 'd raythér be where Haig his kilties led
  In yon great day, an' dee in sicna fight.
Jock, Jock, auld man, God help us when a 's by,
  An' we 're gaun legless, airmless, deef, an' blin';
If sodgers noo maun on a strae pock lie,
  What will it be when a' the fechtin 's dune?

. . . . . .

The sparreys thinkna o' the chitterin' years.
I 'm lairnin' the tin whussle!—ye 'll grind shears,
Mind me to Sandy.—Yours aye, Geordie Spiers.

HER DEEIN' WISH

WILD drave the snaw alang West Linton muir,
And soughed through Biggar Moss,
Whaur daith that nicht set whurlin' through the air
The plank we a' maun cross.
'Twas Maynie, Geordie's wife, waited the ca',
Up in the Weaver's Close.

Aside the bed Geordie held Maynie's han',
Daith fummeled wi' the lock,
But Maynie's soul, aye lazy on the gaun,
Was sweir to heed the knock,
And Geordie gaunted—love sae lichtly sawn
Brairds ill on hairts o' rock.

'Oh! for my pipe!' was Geordie's hairt's desire,
But Maynie held him fast;
And syne he fell to wunnerin' if the fire
Or Maynie wad sink last.
'I weel could spare her for the heavenly choir,
Ayont this nicht o' blast.'

Laichly he spak, but to that weel-tuned ear,
That aye had herkened weel,
The words seeped in, and syne the trump sae clear
Brocht Geordie to the heel—
'Geordie, my man, I henna muckle fear,
Daith's weel-wurn road to speel.

HER DEEIN' WISH

' I 've dune my best, and when life's trauchle 's gane,
An' a' that 's wrang turns richt,
Tak' my dune body ower to Pettinain,
For I maun dee this nicht.
We 'll baith hae peace when I lie wi' my ain,
Gress-happit oot o' sicht.'

Geordie thocht lang, he 'd baud to dae his pairt,
Ere daith's dark nicht-fa' cam'.
Wi' dooncast broo as clammy as a clairt,
Thae thochts through darkness swam ;
But when his thinkin' took the ben-ward airt,
He fund it through a dram.

' Maynie,' the words brak frae his heavin' chest,
' When ye hev stown away,
We 'll try ye first, and see if ye will rest,
On Biggar Kirkyaird brae.
And, if ye willna, then we 'll tak' ye west,
On a guid simmer day.'

COMMUNION

I SEND ye this sprig frae the hills ever hamely,
A wee bit white heather frae braes that ye ken.
For luck, an' wi' love in the 'oor that is lanely—
I pu'ed it mysel' in a neuk o' the glen.

The Fell's bonnie briest wi' the purple is streekit.
The souter has cairted his skeps to Cardon.
The hey hairst is hame, an' yestreen it was theekit—
Yer faither's yae crack is the yellowin' corn.

But oh, my dear laddie, there 's nane but a mither
Can ken o' the stouns that are ruggin' the hairt.
The corn an' the heath they were ripenin' thegither
On that day fower years when the war garred us pairt.

I lift up my een where on hills heather-deckit
The souter's thrang bees drink the sweet honey-dew.
Yer faither, puir man, keeps the door aye unsneckit—
He 's little to say, but he wearies for you.

Last Sunday the glen God's Communion was mindin',
I thocht on ye, bairn, on the road through the muir,
An' pu'ed this white sprig where the wee burn gangs windin'—
In yer mither's auld Bible 'twas sanctified there.

COMMUNION

Sae tak' ye this flo'er that the Lord's love has blessit,
And may His communion fa' saft on my ain.
This white sprig o' heather my ain lips hae kissit,
Oh, tak' it, dear lad, as a token frae hame.

THE SANGSTERS

It 's sho'erin' doon sweet spates o' simmer sang
On the flo'er-scented breeze,
And nestin' birds wi' love seem awfu' thrang
Amang the bonnie trees,
Amang the bonnie trees,
Ablow yon simmer sky,
That hauds the hame where love for ever drees,[1]
And saft winds ever sigh.

Herk! hoo he pipes his deep soul-fillin' note,
Some blackie's love to win;
There 's rowth o' hope rowed in that gowden throat,
Lifted sae high abune,
Lifted sae high abune,
The pipin' lovers there,
Oh, bird o' sang, 'tis noo heavens love soughs in,
Blawn on the simmer air.

The mavis drooks his feathers in the burn,
And suns them on the lea;
Syne to the lift wi' mony a bonnie turn,
The waves o' singin' flee,
The waves o' singin' flee,
Unhinnert frae his hairt,
And in God's hame that sang will gethered be,
By angels o' that airt.

[1] Endures.

THE SANGSTERS

'Mong gowden whuns the wheeplin' linties big
A moss-bund couthie hame ;
And far abune the dew-filled daisied rig,
Like blessin' on the same,
Like blessin' on the same,
Love-tochered frae the hills,
The laverock lifts the sang o' daithless fame,
And a' my langin' stills.

Low fa's the whaup's wild cry across the muir,
As yin whase soul is fey,
An' yet He kens, wha set ilk sang-bird there,
The hill-whaups greetin' lay,
The hill-whaups greetin' lay,
Oh, Love that hauds up a' !
Airt ye ilk sang, o' this lown simmer day,
Intil yer ain nichtfa'.

SCOTLAND

Oh, precious name! that yont the sunderin' seas
To mony a hairt, rememberin', brings the tear;
Whase broadcast sangs are crooned on ilka breeze,
An' fa' fu' sweet upon the alien ear.

Wad that my hairt could frame a bonnie sang,
No' for the deidly sough o' passin' praise,
Na! steer me yont far frae that droothy thrang,
Wha drink the life's-bluid o' the sangs they raise.

But stannin' laich, weel hidden in the howe,
O' thee, auld Scotland, an' for thee I sing.
Oh, bonnie land, roond whilk the saut waves rowe!
An' mists at e'enin' to the sweet braes cling.

Yince mair thy glens are furrowed deep wi' loss,
The wail o' grief is never far frae thee;
Thy crown is maistly tappit wi' a cross,
An' tears the plaid that faulds thy liberty.

But still we stan'! And stelled upon the hills
We rest the hairt. Oh, storms o' passion, wheesht!
For we wad hear the croonin' voice that stills,
And, waff wi' care, wad seek a mither's briest.

SCOTLAND

Oh, Scotland ! mither, mither o' us a',
We arena' worth it, but we come yince mair.
Lave trauchled hairts in heaven-like wunds that blaw,
An' mitherly, lead hame this Scottish prayer—

'Where martyred saints yince bauldly stude,
Sae for the richt we fain wad stand.
Ye 've welcomed aft the hairt's dear blude
Ootpoured upon the Borderland.

'Ye silent stanes on yonder muir,
Oh, Flodden field ! Oh, sleepin' band !
Plaid-neuk in heaven this broken prayer,
Uplifted for the Borderland.

'Keep, Lord, the soul o' Scotland free,
Frae eastern to its western strand ;
And at the gates for ever be
The guardian o' oor ain dear land.'

MY MITHER'S SANG

A LAICH, sweet soond, like the sab wi' its rise an' fa'
O' the wund through the buddin' thorn.
Wi' growin' bairns in the hoose, an' her love ower a',
Through the trauchle o' ilka morn.
It was there in the thrang frae morn till the sunset fa',
That sang was born.

'Oh, for a closer walk with God.' Dear mither o' mine,
Hoo could ye sing 't in that steer?
Wi' greetin' bairns on the flure, did that hairt o' thine
Jist sing to haud back the tear?
Did the wooin' note, an' the love in ilk bonnie line,
Bring God sae near?

It 's by wi' noo—an' see frae that land sae fair,
Whaur the braes o' God's heaven streetch broad,
There shines the 'licht' she askit for lang an' sair,
An' it glimmers ower a' the road.
Ay, mither, yer walk is the same in the land ower there—
It is close till God.

THE LAST JOURNEY [1]

I 'VE had my last feed frae the stable heck,
O' sun-drooked hay frae aff the meedow lan',
An' noo the maister leads an unco wreck
Thro' the ferm close on legs that scarce can stan'.

A kindly haun' is faulded on my broo,
The mistress lays her cheek against my ain,
A lang fareweel through tears she whispers noo,
For that last journey I maun tak alane.

Ahint the gig I 'm heltered wi' a tow,
Atween the trams I see the new bocht meer.
Each hes his day, the waters jap an' jow,
An' sae the tide o' fortune brings me here.

Doon through the perks wi' stummlin' feet I gang,
The wee burn seems to sing a last fareweel,
Abune my heid a mavis pipes his sang,
The yaffin collie dodges round each heel.

The new meer drinks her fill frae oot the burn,
Whase jummlin' glory slockened workin' days.
Dust intil dust horses an' men return :
I 've had my day upon the sunny braes.

[1] The writer has been frequently touched by the pathos attending the worn-out farm horse led to final auction behind the new-bought successor.

An' noo I stan' wi' ithers in the mairt,
An auld dune horse that waits the hinmaist bode.
The hammer fa's that tells my tremmlin' hairt,
I 'm yokit for the last turn doon the road.

A BORDER SANGSTER'S PRAYER

WHILES frae the window o' my hairt they flicker,
Far-wannered soonds that come I kenna hoo,
For nane can tell the music an' the bicker
O' yon wee burn that streeks the dark hill's broo.
Sae come thae sangs, an' oh! I wad mak siccar,
If they ring true.

A laddie wearied wi' a lang day's guddlin',
Lays by his thresh o' troots upon the brae;
Syne far abune the war-path o' his puddlin',
Frae a clean pule, an' through a wheaten strae
Drinks—fills his hairt wi' things past understandin',
In his bauld day.

We 're a' God's bairns sair trauchled wi' the strivin,'
Aside the burn edge o' Life's passin' oor,
An', laddie-like, when days are far frae thrivin',
We leave the thresh o' things among the stoor,
And on the heichts, where wunds their weys are drivin',
Seek His ain po'er.

I 've herkened lang, and far abune my sinnin',
When hunkerin' in the dour glen o' despair,
I 've seen heaven's mercy doon the hillside rinnin',
Lord God o' a', Yer love is ever there,
And heard at sunset oor the angels hymnin'
Their evenin' prayer.

'Tis then the dews o' peace come saftly dreepin',
An' drook the soul wi' their forgiveness sweet,
And in the howe o' heaven's eternal keepin',
Love an' mysel' within the sunlicht meet,
Sangs flude my hairt, the whaups alane gang weepin',
'Mong muirs o' peat.

An' this my prayer, when gates abune are swingin',
And I at last the gowden stairs maun clim',
To find a bield wi' langsyne glories hingin',
Weel-backit frae the saints an' seraphim,
That I may croon—that wistna o' sic singin'—
A muirland hymn.

For lang within his smiddy he had hammered micht an' main,
The sperks o' thocht gaun fleein' through the flure,
The dunts upon the study cried lood oot his weicht o' brain,
And like Samson he had rowth o' tousled hair.

Wi' his chappin' folk had gethered, an' the horse-shaes o' his sangs
Gaed bizzin' yin by yin oot through the byne.
Syne rawed alang the smiddy bauks ilk ballant skenklin' hangs,
And a voice within him spak, 'There 's nane like mine.'

He read them to his cronies, an' the verdict was 'save 's a','
'There 's nane noo leevin' wi' sic rhymin' turns.'
But 'twas left to Tammas Wabster, an' nane like Tam could blaw—
'Freends, we needna langer murn for Rabbie Burns.'

An' sae Rab stoppit workin'—he had dykin' for his tred,
An' wife an' weans leeved lichtly on his muse.
For a sunset wasna fillin' to yin no' poet bred—
'Twas mair like prose that keeked through wee Rab's trews.

Sae Robbie worked wi' sunsets—it was grand to see
him stan'
At the darkenin', hingin' ower a drystane dyke.
Syne, to the lowin' glory, he wad streetch a poet
haun',
An' thochts cam like a swairmin' bum-bee's byke.

But Janet, that 's Rab's wifie, saw an empty parritch
pat,
That the manna o' a sunset couldna fill,
And saw the shoggly cairt o' sang in whilk the poet
sat
Wad sune be coupit braidside on life's hill.

She wistna wha the bodie was that drave Rab to
the deil,
Some cronie dootless o' the public-hoose,
Wha leeved ayont Parnassus, a heicht that few can
speel,
The speelin' o 't had left Rab unco croose.

But Janet, sairly angered, thocht upon the hungry
weans,
Wi' a mither's, no' a wud-be poet's hairt.
Thocht she, my singin' mannie, ye will pree the waes
an' pains,
An' wi' the stervin' hoosehold thole yer pairt.

. . . . . .

Rab, wi' poetic daunner, stepped oot-ower the flure
next morn,
His brekfast lay ootstreetched upon the plate—
'Twas the latest gowden sonnet frae a Peebles paper
torn,
An' Janet's tongue cam rowin' in full spate !—

' Stick to yer tred, Rab, though it be
Dykin', or sortin' kye,
And frae yer bannet let that bee
Gang bummin' to the sky.'

THE SINGER

A' DAY I hae heard yer sang,
A' day ower the burn the singin';
Bonnie bird, what a cheery sang,
Frae the hawthorn ringin'.

Oh, care in the howe o' the hairt,
Herken lang whaur the spate comes sweepin';
The spate o' sang frae the hawthorn airt,
Through the sunlicht dreepin'.

The hawthorn buds in the auld haw tree
Are burstin' there in the simmer glory;
An' oh! the sang 's like a psalm to me,
Wha lo'es yer story.

Could I grup the soul in the lilt,
But I canna, bird, for the care that 's deavin';
There 's aye a stang rowed close intilt,
Stabs the hairt wi' grievin'.

Bird that sings in the bonnie glen,
Abune the wee burn's happy foamin',
Yer sang wins hame, it gangs saftly ben,
At the simmer gloamin'.

A CITY BURIAL

Nae kindly touch is here, nae sough o' hame
For him wha lo'ed the hills an' rinnin' burns.
Nae yin need tell me that it 's a' the same,
When yont to God the soul o' man returns.

Eh, man, I ken hoo tenderly at last
In oor ain glen we lay the quaite hairts by,
Ower ilk kenned briest the rich, saft mool is cast,
An' ilka yin is happit wi' a sigh.

But here whaur things a' tapsal-teerie rowe,
The fecht gangs on till folk rin out o' braith,
An' when some soul slips quaitely through daith's howe,
They stopna fechtin', for Life 's mair than Daith.

But in oor glen when yin steps hame to God,
We lowse frae wark, and wi' an auld-warld grace
Convoy oor freend in sorrow doon the road,
An' lay him gently in his restin' place.

The heichts o' Tweeddale lift ilk bonnie briest
Abune a glen wi' flo'ers bedeckit fair,
While through its strath the burn gangs wimplin' east—
That bonnie land yer een will see nae mair.

Oh, freend o' mine, wha lo'ed oor auld Kirkyaird,
No' in this place o' cley on sic a day :
Na ! I 'd hae laid ye neth a bonnier swaird—
The daisied glory o' the auld Kirk brae.

THE DESERTED WORKSHOP

I MIND the day when in a circle roond,
The souters pu'ed the lingel-ends an' sang
Auld Border ballants, dod the cheery soond
Gaed bonnie when the leathered lapstane rang.

Three sons o' sang, precentors ilka yin,
Wi' whiles an antrin tramp to swell the bass,
Twae prentice chiels to lead the treble in,
An' swell the praise o' Ballochmyle's braw lass.

Quaitely he sat amang the bursts o' praise—
The maister's hairt was a' for bees an' flo'ers.
Yae psalm, yin only, could the gude-man raise,
The hundredth, wi' His trith that aye endures.

A bunch o' broom upon the maister's richt,
Weel worn, brings back the curler's manly play.
Ay, and I 've heard him on a July nicht,
Gang ower the glory o' a curlin' day.

In lang forenichts when winter's snaw blew snell,
A hauf-made skep brocht mem'ries o' Cardon.
A roset haun' upon the lint-threed fell—
The souter's soul was where the blithe bees drone.

Deep lay the pairin's roond the circlin' feet.
The roset pat is hotterin' on the fire—
Oh mem'ry wi' my hairt enoo ye meet!
I hearken for the souter's bonnie choir—

But quaiteness fa's, where yince was unco steer.
The tacket drivin' dunners nevermair.
Auld times come rowin' frae a by-gane year,
Thae times I played upon a buit-spread flure.

Is 't daith? aweel, some folk wad ca' it daith.
To me, a souter's bairn, sic never dees.
I 'll mind o't till I draw my hinmaist braith,
Life till the end will aye haud flo'ers an' bees.

He 's wi' us yet, the maister o' the men,
But o' the choir maist sing amang the blest.
Whae kens, when we hae passed the daurk, laich glen,
We 'll hear them singing in the souter's rest.

An' we 'll gang ower—But oh! there 's silence cauld
In this dear place that speaks o' auld lang syne.
Nae hammer fa's, nae Border love-sang auld
Comes to this waitin', listenin' hairt o' mine.

THE PSALMS

THREE chiels forgethered at the Auld Kirk gate
Yae day in June,
Crackin' o' jidgment, an' the lost estate
O' folk in toon,
O' whae it was last Sunday in the plate
Pat hauf-a-croon.

The crack fell roond to prices at the mairt
O' Border lambs,
An' hoo the landlord o' the auld White Hairt
Watered the drams,
Syne lawyer Dyson backed his elder's cairt
Against the psalms.

Wi' wordy flow the lawyer set things gaun,
'Gie me the 'oor,
When God the Lord streetched oot His michty haun',
Raised sic a stoor,
That Israel fund nae bield in a' the lan'
Wherein to co'er.'

'Aweel sae be it, ilk yin to their tred,
Nae brae I 've speeled.'
Said yin whase knees bespak him weavin' bred,
And puirly creeled,
'By howms sae green my weaver's soul 's been led,
That psalm 's my bield.'

'Afore I gie the bell the kindly jow,
In God's ain name,'
Said he wha dwalt aside the Auld Kirk knowe,
O' beadle fame.
'I 'm wi' ye, Wullie, ay, the shepherd's howe
Is maist like hame.'

'But here 's M'Bride,' and as the buirdly form
Wha kept the Toll
Stepped to the gate, the beadle speired that morn,
This quastin droll—
'To what auld psalm wad ye in reivin' storm
Tether yer soul?'

'God's strength an' refuge, sung on muirs lang syne
Is awfae true,
But covenantin' draws ower straucht a line
Wi' moody broo,
The fortieth psalm comes to this hairt o' mine
Like drappin' dew.

'I 've waited, neebours, for the Lord my God,
In cauld an' weet,
He lowsed, when lairded I could nae langer plod,
My glaury feet,
I 'm saveit noo, an' trudge Life's hard toll road,
My Lord to meet.'

Sae spak the tollman, an' the jowing bell
In simmer calm
Stoppit ; and frae the kirk wi' sab an' swell,
An' healin' balm,
They lifted up in sang to God's Ain Sel',
The tollman's psalm.

THE BACK-END

Wund o' this autumn 'oor across the heather muir,
Ye 're blawin', blawin'.
An' at my feet the rowans red, an' fair,
Are fa'in', fa'in'.
On stookit corn the craws are dennerin' there,
An' crawin', crawin'.

I ken an odds on Burghmuir laich lan',
It 's barin', barin'.
An' through the neeps the laird wi' gun in haun',
Is farin', farin'.
While 'hint the dyke auld Poachie taks his stan',
Sae darin', darin'.

The wee bit bairns are sprauchlin' up the brae,
Ilk yin unwillin'.
They 're bund to gang—the schule taks up the day,
Wi' drillin', drillin'.
There 's no' a wean but fain wad stop away,
Frae schulin', schulin'.

The tawtie-howkers cam owerby yestreen,
A' singin', singin'.
Dod, yon 's the life, wi' dirt up to the een,
An' clingin', clingin'.
The rattlin' cairts a' doon the glen are seen,
Hairst-bringin', bringin'.

THE BACK-END

Auld weedae WABSTER wi' her lade o' sticks,
Comes bendin', bendin'.
I see BOGHA' is heidin' a' his ricks,
Raip-rendin', rendin'.
Ay! ay! wi' Time we canna play bairns' tricks,
It 's endin', endin'.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(A Scots Version)

HAME o' the soul, ah, God whilk art abune,
Thy name is a' in a', maist ilka nicht
Thy kindly mune
Ower the dark staney howe spreads oot its licht,
When day is dune.

Hoo can it, Lord? hoo can the glisk o' hame
Be glisked doonby 'mang a' the stoor an' steer?
Wha is 't to blame?
That Heaven's dear wull seems, when it 's met doon here,
Sae far frae hame?

Oor daily breid! na, na! it 's no eneuch,
A thenkfu' sparrey may lift up its sang
For crusts gey teuch,
An' as for him wha daes his neebour wrang,
Sough follows sough.

Ilk day, dear Lord, as we unsneck the door
Temptation wi' a jow comes rowin' in:
Herk to its roar!
Wrax us Thy grace. Oh, haud the evil yin
Back frae the door.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Alang the plainstanes edge 'tween shop an' street
The blades o' gress lift up their heids to God.
Ye canna see 't!
Aweel, God help ye, for they pint the road
For hamegaun feet.

A SANG O' PEACE

An unco din we 've passit through,
An' a' the bells that hameward rang,
Were ocht but fu'
O' love-lilts new.
We 've made ower muckle o' a sang
That 's far frae true.

I ken peace bides amang the hills,
But that 's God's ain for evermair.
His love owerfills
The lippin' rills,
Whaur troots for joy, mang threshes fair,
Loup in the pules.

But whaur 's the peace to whilk men plod?
I hear a sough no' like the lown,
Saft sang o' God,
When, wi' his load,
The weary-hairted hame has stown
The canny road.

Yestreen, laich-doon, I saw it swing,
An auld trench coul, that yince faced hell.
Oh, winsome thing.
Hoo sweet ye hing,
Jammed fu' o' flo'ers sent by God's sel',
O' peace to sing.

THE AULD GLEN

THERE 's a ribbon o' road rins through the glen,
An' the stoor an' steer o' ilk passin' day
Seem like daith's cauld haun' that gangs wraxin' ben,
An' it 's this folk say,
' For the auld time peace, an' the auld time men
Ye needna pray.'

There 's a wearyfu' din on yer bonnie broo,
Whaur the gates ootstreetched, and yince lockit fast
Kepped the waitin' laird, an' he had to boo
Ere he wan past.
But the Toll gate 's gane, an' it 's bedlam noo,
And like to last.

Oh my auld grey glen wi' the langsyne hairt,
An' the peace that cam wi' the bygane years.
For the sough o' calm that was aye yer airt,
There 's few folk speers.
There 's a waefu' steer, an' I staun' apairt,
Hairt-filled wi' tears.

Ay, the curse o' gowd fills ilk pechin' briest,
It 's an unco scrammel alang Life's road.
But there comes an 'oor when we 're facit east
To meet wi' God.
An' him that 's maist may be coonted least,
Wi' his gowden load.

'TWEEN CLYDE AND TWEED

There 's a ribbon o' road rins through the muir,
Whaur a byroad leads to KILBUCHO hills,
I maun lowse an' aff, for the sunlicht 's there,
An' the peace that stills.
Whaur the dear God spreads on the heather flure,
The singin' rills.

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